Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

Building back a better post-COVID-19 world with sustainable forest products

A STATEMENT FROM THE ACSFI

8 October 2020

The Advisory Committee on Sustainable Forest-based Industries (ACSFI) is a statutory body that guides FAO on issues concerning the sustainable consumption and production of forest products. It also provides a forum for dialogue between Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the private sector, with a view to identifying strategic actions that promote sustainable forest management.

The ACSFI *recognises* that the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting all aspects of our lives across the world, including the food trade, food supply chains and markets, as well as people's lives, livelihoods, and nutrition.

The ACSFI *highlights* that during the pandemic, forest products have played a crucial role in keeping people safe and healthy by providing personal protective equipment, and other supplies and services, including hygiene and sanitary products, biomass for heating, ethanol for sanitizer, respirator paper, and packaging for food and other parcels. In order to continue the uninterrupted supply of these products, the forest sector has been appropriately recognized in many parts of the world as an essential service.

The ACSFI *acknowledges* and applauds the calls of global business leaders for COVID-19 recovery plans to be green, sustainable and climate-smart, recognizing that the underlying need for transforming our economies has, if anything, intensified as a result of the pandemic.

The ACSFI *supports* the United Nations (UN) Secretary-General António Guterres' ambitions for saving lives and livelihoods and building a prosperous, inclusive, and sustainable future that involves beating the virus, addressing climate change and creating new jobs through actions that move us from the grey to the green economy, demonstrating that green growth remains the best growth strategy.

Forest industries provide an essential contribution to net zero emissions recoveries, to which many businesses are committing in line with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, to hold the global rise in average temperature to well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and pursue efforts to limit this even further to 1.5 degrees. The 4th assessment of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) supported the important role forest industries will play in meeting this ambition.

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The ACSFI *asserts* that a sustainable forest sector lies at the heart of COVID-19 recovery plans that seek to build back better. There is now a unique chance to substitute high fossil fuel-based products with those from a renewable resource.

As policy makers work to create enabling conditions that support sustainable approaches, and industries that can ensure their societies can build back better, the ACSFI *advises* that sustainable forest-based industries provide:

- **long-term sustainable management of precious forest resources**. We are long-term stewards of the forest and aim to balance various demands to maximize societal benefit. In the long term, active sustainable forest management increases the forest resources available and thus forms the foundation of every other benefit;
- **livelihoods and green jobs**, in particular in rural areas;
- **health and hygiene products** that are essential both in the front line fight to combat the virus and in keeping people healthy and safe, and will enable governments to open economies while we learn how to live with the virus, until a vaccine is found;
- **biodegradable, reusable, and recyclable paper-based packaging** that is more environmentally-friendly than single-use plastics and helps to safely deliver important products in demand around the world;
- support for our move to a **lower fossil carbon-economy**. A wide range of **harvested wood products**, such as those required to build houses that store carbon and substitute for more energy-intensive materials;
- promote the use of sustainably sourced wood in construction and wood products to **improve life quality and health**. Wood used in homes, workplace and in public buildings improves indoor air quality, and wood's natural warmth and comfort produce calming, stress reducing effects;
- crucial support for sustainable **food systems** through the production of wood energy and wild foods, often collected in forests by forest-based communities;
- an opportunity to use what would otherwise be wood waste and turn it into a critical component of a functioning sustainable circular **bioeconomy**;
- the sustainable provision of wood and other **ecosystem services** related for example to carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation, biodiversity and clean water;
- tangible contributions to the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and Global Forest Goals** and **Targets of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2030**;
- industries at all scales that **safeguards biodiversity**; and
- a valuable **amenity for recreation and recuperation** and support for mental health and well-being.

The ACSFI and its members are fully committed to promote strategic planning to build an enabling and impact-oriented framework for joint and coordinated action to build back better by promoting the sustainable consumption and production of forest products.

This is based on two key principles:

- Build back better *together* – by pursuing a collaborative approach of all stakeholders concerned, including governments, civil society, academia, development partners such as FAO and the private sector to facilitate collaboration and coordination of shared initiatives, and definitions of success that identify gaps and address deliverables.
- Build back better *informed* – by making available key data and promoting joint research efforts and actions to provide information on responsible supply and demand systems as well as strategic communications.

The ACSFI and its members *call upon* FAO, its member countries, the private sector and other stakeholders to jointly strengthen their engagement to effectively contribute to building back better a post-COVID-19 world in which the sustainable production and use of forest products are a cornerstone of prosperous and sustainable green economies, safeguarding the livelihood of the billions of people depending on forest-based resources.

ACSFI Members

Jose Urtubey, Director, Grupo Tapebicuá, Argentina.
Ross Hampton, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Forest Products Association (AFPA), Australia.
José Carlos da Fonseca Junior, Executive Director, Brazilian Tree Industry (IBA), Brazil.
Derek Nighbor, Chief Executive Officer, Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC), Canada.
Wu Shengfu, **President**, China Wood Culture Association, China.
Timo Jaatinen, Director-General, Finnish Forest Industries Federation, Finland.
Paul-Antoine Lacour, Directeur général, Union Française des Industries des Cartons, Papiers et Celluloses (COPACEL), France.
Klaus Windhagen, Director-General, German Pulp and Paper Association (VDP), Germany.
Kwame Asamoah Adam, Chief Executive Officer, Ghana Timber Millers Organization, Ghana.
Shobhan Mittal, President, Greenply Industries, India.
Indroyono Soesilo, Chairman, Association of Indonesian Forest Concessionaires, Indonesia.
Tsunehiro Ogawa, President, Japan Paper Association, Japan.
David Rhodes, Chief Executive Officer, New Zealand Forest Owners Association, New Zealand.
Boris Zingarevich, Vice-President, Russian National Pulp and Paper Association (RAO Bumprom), Russian Federation.
Jane Molony, Executive Director, Paper Manufacturers Association, South Africa.
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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE FOREST-BASED INDUSTRIES (ACSFI)

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